

## The Expeditionary MCM (ExMCM) Company: The Newest Capability in U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Community



150729-N-RZ218-013 RED SEA (July 29, 2015) - U.S. Navy Sailors assigned to Commander, Task Group (CTG) 56.1, launch a Mk 18 Mod 2 unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) from an 11-meter rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB). CTG 56.1 conducts mine countermeasures, explosive ordnance disposal, salvage diving, and force protection operations throughout the 5th Fleet area of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class John Paul Kotara II/RELEASED)



By **DON Innovation**



The U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) community completely transformed a 2012 Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) Fastlane Initiative into the Navy's premier Mine Countermeasures (MCM) unit of action, the Expeditionary MCM (ExMCM) Company.

The success and speed of this truly groundbreaking initiative, including the fielding of the MK18 unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) family of systems and commercial remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), resulted in the delivery of effective and reliable operational MCM capability in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility. Due to its many successes, global demand for this specialized capability continues to grow.

“They've made themselves indispensable in rather short order,” said Capt. Dean Muriano, commodore of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group One, speaking of the ExMCM capability. “Our Sailors are the drivers behind this innovation; they have been remarkable as they've developed tactics, techniques and procedures and integrated technologies into their unit as well as integrating themselves into multiple platforms and units.”

The Expeditionary Mine Countermeasures (ExMCM) Company was initially conceived in 2012 as a response to a Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Joint Urgent Operational Need for increased mine countermeasures (MCM) capacity at a time of heightened tensions in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). Utilizing special Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) Fastlane acquisition authorities, the U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) community rapidly fielded a force to employ newly acquired unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) in concert with legacy MCM platforms and assets, many of them nearing the end of their projected service life. The UUVs, previously commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) items, were adapted and re-purposed for military use. These particular UUVs eventually became the MK18 UUV Family of Systems.

“ExMCM isn't built around a sensor or a platform, rather it's a command and control construct bringing together the right Sailors to perform the complete detect to engage to attribute sequence in a single, expeditionary unit of action,” added Muriano.

ExMCM Company innovators built a reliable, flexible, and enduring stand-alone MCM capability by expertly coupling some of the most sophisticated UUVs and ROVs on the market, with the traditional EOD MCM dive platoons, that resulted in producing the rapid development of this warfighting capability. This capability was accomplished at a fraction of the cost of other emerging Navy platforms and systems, and without an institutional framework or roadmap for success. The Navy EOD community has been unwavering in its ability to employ advanced technologies and develop revolutionary tactics, techniques, and procedures to mitigate and neutralize ever-evolving threats to our Nation.

“They will continue to do remarkable things as they develop new tactics and innovate with new and different sensors to include UUVs, USVs, and potentially even UAVs,” said Muriano.



160514-N-SF508-007 PANAMA CITY, Fla. (May 14, 2016)  
— Engineman 1st Class Dustin Collins (left) and Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Otelo Rodriguez (right), assigned to Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 2 (MDSU) Unmanned Systems Platoon 204, conduct pre-mission checks on a Mk. 18. Mod. 1 unmanned underwater vehicle during an Expeditionary Mine Countermeasure (ExMCM) certification exercise at Naval Support Activity Panama City, Fla. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Charles Oki/Released)



*160514-N-SF508-179 PANAMA CITY, Fla. (May 14, 2016) — Engineman 2nd Class Jonathan Lavoie (left) and Aerographer's Mate 1st Class Christopher Kyall (right), assigned to Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 2 (MDSU) Unmanned Systems Platoon 204, lower a Mark 18 Mod. 2 unmanned underwater vehicle into the water during an Expeditionary Mine Countermeasure (ExMCM) certification exercise at Naval Support Activity Panama City, Fla. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Charles Oki/Released)*

With the development and implementation of the ExMCM, Commander, U.S. FIFTH Fleet, quickly recognized that he had a unique capability on his hands, one that yielded immediate, and reliable, operational MCM effectiveness. The UUVs provided critical search and detection capabilities and, when coupled with an EOD MCM Platoon, delivered the entire MCM Detect-to-Engage sequence into a single unit of action, the ExMCM Company. The flexibility presented by this newly formed MCM Adaptive Force Package expanded U.S. Navy MCM capabilities, resulting in the easy decision by Navy senior leaders to formalize this new unit of action and hand the reins to Sailors.

Companies deployed to CENTCOM in early 2015. Since then, U.S. Navy ExMCM Company operators have, in short order, rapidly developed, prototyped, and demonstrated revolutionary MCM tactics, techniques, and procedures in a variety of operational environments and from a wide suite of platforms. Today, six ExMCM Companies support CENTCOM operations, with two simultaneously deployed to Bahrain and two additional ExMCM Companies projected as growth in FY18. The U.S. Navy EOD community currently operates more than 100 UUVs, more than any other force in the Navy.

The first two Sailor-led ExMCM

U.S. Navy ExMCM Company operators transformed an ad hoc solution for additional MCM capacity into the force of choice for MCM operations. Their superb performance elevated demand across the globe, with SIXTH and SEVENTH Fleet Commanders requesting ExMCM Companies of their own. The ExMCM Company is the only rapidly deployable and scalable MCM force package in the Navy today. Its successes are directly attributable to the Sailors operating its systems.

In 2016, an ExMCM Company embarked USS Freedom (LCS-1) during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2016 in the Southern California (SOCAL) Operating Area (OPAREA), a first-of event for any full Detect-to-Engage MCM capability on a Littoral Combat Ship (LCS).

The ExMCM Company was never envisioned to operate from a LCS, but the ExMCM Company operators proved that operation could be accomplished. The ExMCM Company overcame significant obstacles in achieving timely certifications and authorities for successful embarkation

and employment. Exercise results validated ExMCM Company operations from LCS as a viable option for the Fleet Commander.

To date, ExMCM Companies have conducted rapid response fly-away missions and exercises across the globe. With a relatively small footprint, and an adaptable force package, the U.S. Navy EOD community provides the Fleet Commander with flexible response options. No other single MCM unit of action in the inventory detects, identifies, neutralizes, and recovers underwater threats for exploitation and possible attribution.

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The Explosive Ordnance Disposal Expeditionary Mine Countermeasures Company Team was recognized with honorable mention for the 2016 Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Innovation Award in the Innovation Leadership category.

The SECNAV Innovation Awards recognize the top innovators within the Department of the Navy (DON). Their accomplishments are remarkable and serve as inspiration for the Navy and Marine Corps to think boldly and solve the fleet and force's most challenging problems.